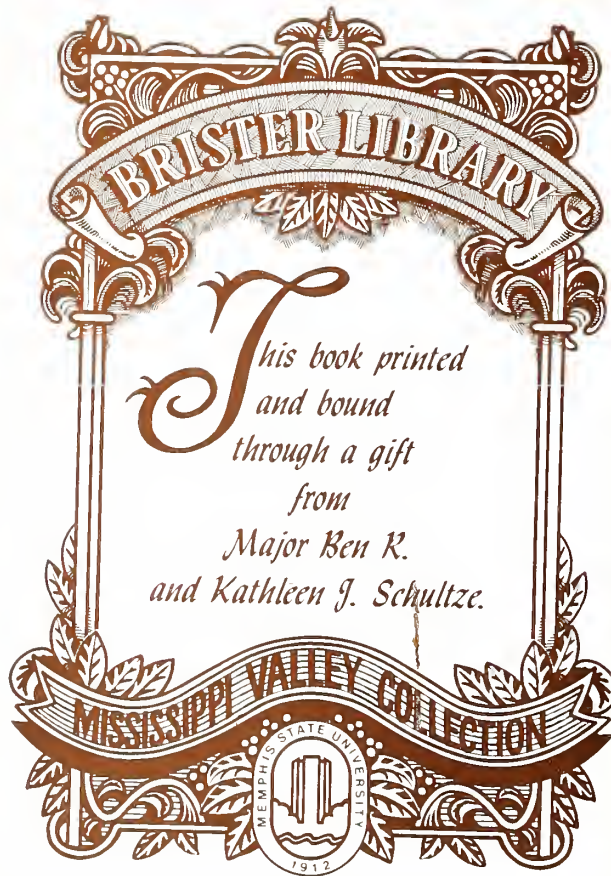


RECENT TENNESSEE
POLITICAL HISTORY
INTERVIEWS WITH
JAMES CUMMINGS

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
TRANSCRIBER - MARY JANE MORGAN
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
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MARCH 25, 1978

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

TRANSCRIBED - MARY JANE MORGAN

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Cummings

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PLACE

(Dor) Henry, Dor

DATE

3/25/78

James H. Cummings
(Interviewee)

Charles W. Crawford
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
of the John Willard Brister Library
of Memphis State University)

(OHRO Form B)

emy, which was a school conducted by a schoolmaster from Canada. When I got through with that course I taught school for a couple of years in a one-room school, one teacher and one room school here in the county, and I had a salary of \$35 a month and saved enough money to go to a business college.

Dr. CRAWFORD: What years did you teach school, Mr.

Cummings:

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Uh, in 1908 and 1909. I remember it easily because we were at noon recess having a game of marbles in the dirt road in front of the school-house when a man came along and told us that Senator Carmack had been killed on the streets of Nashville. That was 1908.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. You were teaching school then.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I was teaching school at the age of eighteen.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, let's see. He was shot by Duncan and Robert Cooper.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He was shot on the street, and Duncan Cooper and his son Robin were indicted for murder. And Robin was acquitted--and Duncan Cooper took his appeal to the Supreme Court, and it was affirmed. And on the same day Governor Patterson pardoned him. And out of that came the disturbing situation with Tennessee politics. Carmack and Patterson had been candidates for the governorship. And the whiskey, liquor, dramatic issue, came to the top of the pot. Patterson was a local option man; Carmack advocated prohibition laws. And it was very heated and

after his pardon of Duncan Cooper, after Governor Patterson pardoned Duncan Co Cooper, the uprising came in politics. Governor Patterson gave up his nomination and they called in Bob Taylor of the United States Senate to run for governor, and the Democrats in the hope that his popularity would withstand the assault that was being made. But in spite of Senator Taylor's popularity, Ben W. Hooper was elected; a Republican from Newport, Tennessee, was elected governor, the first Republican governor elected since Hawkins, I guess--Civil War, following the Civil War. And Governor Hooper served for two terms. That was the end of that era.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Why would you say that even Bob Taylor could not win in 1910?

SENATOR CUTTINGS:

The issue became--he couldn't rid himself of the opposition to Patterson. And the whiskey issue--prohibition issue rose to the top of the pot. And Patterson forces had been instrumental in nominating for election in August of that year a judiciary that was alledged to be politically minded. And Patterson and the Supreme Court . . . and they nominated and elected an independent judiciary. And it just went right on and Hooper was elected on the Republican ticket, and even the popularity of Governor Taylor couldn't stem the tide. I was just a young man at that time, but I remember it very well.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Do you remember anything much about those four years of Ben Hooper's administration?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: No, I do not. I was not in state govern-

ment. And I just recall it. Years and years after that, I served in legislature with Governor Hooper. He was an elected member of the legislature from Cocke County. But I have not very much except that it was predominantly a fusion legislature composed of rebel Democrats who were voting Democrat to the Republicans, and Carmack was the hero of the era. And that was when his monument was put at the entrance of the Capitol. Most prominent place, notwithstanding three presidents of the United States that we'd had. Carmack's statue took the place of prominence, at the entrance of the Capitol, as you know.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. And has anyone ever tried to remove it?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, during my term of legislature, an effort was made when they built the tunnel to the Capitol, entrance tunnel, to remove Carmack's statue, and place it at some less conspicuous place. But that was not successful. I was among those that didn't want to create the disturbance of moving it. It had been placed there by the Legislature at the time. And Carmack had a son, lived in my district, Ned Carmack, young Carmack, and for various reasons I was one of those that stood in the way of the movement, of the replacement, placing it at a less conspicuous place. And it was not placed, it's still there. Right above the tunnel entrance, as you recall it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Then I continued here in county office until my chancellor, Governor Albert H. Roberts, became a candidate for governor, and I joined his headquarters force and was with him.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you get elected to the county office, Mr. Cummings?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I was elected to the county office in August, 1914.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was that office?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Circuit Court Clerk.

DR. CRAWFORD: Okay. And that's what you were doing when. . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: During the Hooper administration.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. When A. H. Roberts decided to run for governor.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he was chancellor.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He was chancellor of this chancery division of which Cannon County was a part. He lived at Livingston.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where was it he lived?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: At Livingston, a far-flung chancery division of fourteen or fifteen counties of which Cannon was one. I accompanied him in during his campaign for governor. He

was successful, and following his inauguration during his term I went to Nashville at his suggestion.

DR. CRAWFORD: Would you tell what you did in his campaign in 1918, Sir?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: During his campaign in 1918 when the road system over our state had not been developed and there was great difficulty in touring the state and making arrangements, places to stop and appointments for speechmaking, means of travel, reporting the crowds, who was present, reporting to the newspapers of the state, the media, the doings as we travelled from town to town across the state in a speechmaking campaign. I was sort of his travelling secretary.

DR. CRAWFORD: You know, what you did in that campaign is usually done by a lot of people now-- a press secretary, a scheduling director . . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, since those days and in modern times some professionalized people are employed to carry on all the things that I did.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see, what was the campaign like? How did you travel, who did you run against?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: We travelled from town to town by automobile, and then by train and even up and down the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers by boat to make it to these various towns.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who did he run against? Did Hooper run

again?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: No, this is the Democratic primary, and the regular election.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was Tom Rye running again? He had been governor, I know.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Rye was not a candidate. And this was in the November election that I'm telling you about. Roberts was nominated in a convention. And this was in the regular election. We travelled across the state in that, and I did the same thing with him when he was a candidate for re-election.

DR. CRAWFORD: In 1920?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: In 1920.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of speaker was Mr. Roberts?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He was a forceful speaker, a vigorous campaigner, and a powerful man on his feet, in speechmaking.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were there any special issues involved?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He was a candidate on the major platform of revising the taxing machinery of the state on the general theory of equalizing the burden of taxation and making it uniform throughout the state. After his election, he advocated--and it was passed--the Tax Reformation Bill. And in the administration of it during his two terms, it developed great opposition. And he was defeated on that issue.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was this the campaign when you did much travel by car?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, in many towns from county seat to county seat where he made speeches, it was necessary to arrange for automobile transportation over them most of the dirt roads.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did a lot of people come out to hear the speeches then?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: People turned out in great numbers for the speeches and we had good crowds. All candidates for statewide office enjoyed good turnout if they were prominent candidates at all.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, people did not have television then.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: People did not have television then, nor radio. And the press was the media for publicity, campaign publicity and reporting of the campaign tour and the speechmaking, who introduced him, who was present, and listing all the names of people of significance. The publicity, and it was part of my duty, my function, to give as good account of our speeches, of course, that there could be. Now, one or two newspaper men would be with us at most of the places. The Nashville papers--there was a man named W. T. Hoffman, for The Banner. And that was the type of campaign that we made.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you meet a lot of people in that campaign?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I met people in practically every county seat of Tennessee that were interested and taking part in the campaign.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where was your campaign headquarters?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: In Nashville, at the Maxwell House.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was sort of usual, wasn't it, to have . . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That was practically the center of political headquarters--the Maxwell House in Nashville, Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did Mr. Roberts travel a great deal in that campaign?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, he went from town to town, covered the state pretty thoroughly.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did he build his organization?
Did he know a lot of people already?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He'd been a leading candidate once before for governor and the judiciary--member of the chancery divisions. The judges of the chancery divisions across the state were among his leading supporters. And in every town there was the clerk of chancery court. And we had all of their names, and they generally were our supporters.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. So you had a campaign organization that you could develop easily.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, that was already pretty well developed, and grew from that nucleus, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you do during the Roberts' administration, 1919 to 1921?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: When he was elected governor of Tennessee, he suggested to me that he wanted me to come to Nashville and be a part of his administration. And I was offered the job, no doubt at his suggestion, in the state comptroller's office. The state comptroller at that time was the tax collecting agency and disbursing agency. The revenue collecting agency of the state under the constitution and laws that existed at that time, was in comptroller's office.

And I had a job of receiving the reports of the tax collecting agencies around the state, the county officers, and reporting it to me. And I audited and collected their taxes and turned the revenue over to the state treasurer. At that time the three constitutional officers of the state had all of those functions. The comptroller's office was the tax collecting and disbursing agency of all revenue. The state treasurer, as the name implies, was the custodian of the funds. And the secretary of state's office had the functions that it now has. Now when Governor Peay was elected, defeating Hooper, eight years hence. .

DR. CRAWFORD: And Hooper was. . . Austin Peay was elected in '22.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Austin Peay was elected in '24.
Alf Taylor was elected in '22.

DR. CRAWFORD: I thought Taylor just served one term. I

didn't know. . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he served, was elected, in '22 and served in '22. . . . elected--he was elected in '21 and went into office in '22. Roberts was elected in 1919 and went in '21. Served until '23. Alf Taylor went in, was elected in the even year, '21, and went into office in '22.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir. Now I see.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: And then Hooper succeeded him. . .
No. Am I getting this wrong?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir. I think that Peay succeeded Taylor. But I'm not sure what year.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Peay defeated Taylor and he was governor until 1927, yeah, four years.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he die in office?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He died in office in 1927--shortly before the expiration of his term. And the Speaker of the Senate was Henry H. Horton, who succeeded upon the death of Peay to the governorship. Correct.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you do after Governor Roberts was defeated?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I continued in the office of state comptroller during Alf Taylor's administration, until spring of Governor Peay's first administration. During that period of time I attended the YMCA night law school. Graduated from that and took the bar examination and got my license to practice law in 1923 and then went to Cumberland University Law School for one year. And

then in 1925 I came back to Woodbury and started practicing law.

DR. CRAWFORD: Then you already were licensed to practice
before you went to Cumberland, weren't you?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. It was a fine experience. The
professors of law when they'd come to a
heavy question of law in the class--Charlton Mosher and I had the same
experience about practicing law--and he would sometimes try, not to
embarrass us particularly, but he would say, "All right, Lawyer Cummings
and Lawyer Mosher, what do you say about that?" And the class and we
had a great time.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of governor was Alf Taylor?
Do you remember anything about . . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He was a fine person, had a fine family,
lived at a house where the War Memorial
Building is now. This was the governor's residence. And he had three
sons. One was Judge Robert L. Taylor, a United States District Judge
for the eastern division. He was a Vanderbilt student at that time.
And Governor Taylor was a lovely person, and everyone liked him. He
took [a] basket on [his] arm and went to the grocery for his family.

DR. CRAWFORD: While he was governor?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: While governor, that's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is it true that he played horseshoes?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I'm not aware of that fact, not . . .
he might have, back in East Tennessee,
where he came from. He was hillbilly country, but during his gover-
norship, I never did know of any activity of that kind.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember anything about his campaign when he defeated Mr. Roberts?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He just defeated Governor Roberts on this issue of taxation, and on his personal popularity and attractiveness as a lovable person. Just his personal popularity and this issue.

DR. CRAWFORD: You know, he had run for governor before, back in 1886, in the War of Roses against his brother .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Brother Bob.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he was not young in 1920, or whenever it was that he ran against Mr. Roberts. I don't remember how old he was.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He was up past middle age.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Do you remember anything about his family? Did they campaign with him?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Not that I recall. Uh, yes, I believe they did appear. He had a couple of boys that sang, helped draw a big crowd.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember anything about that dog of his, he told so many stories about?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: No, he told that story as part of the campaign. But Limber, I think, had long passed off the scene before that time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I believe old Limber had his picture in both The Banner and The Tennessean at some time.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, I'm sure they did, because he made great use of that, not only that but other stories that he'd heard, a great storyteller. And an attractive person on campaign platform, and was able to be elected.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was unusual, for a Republican to be elected then, wasn't it?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, it was. There hadn't been one since following the Civil War, since the Reconstruction days. About fifty years before, Hawkins had been governor.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of governor was Austin Peay?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, Austin Peay campaigned on a platform for the reorganization of the state government, an administrative reorganization bill. So when he was elected governor, there was passed an act reorganizing the administration of state government that was challenged for its constitutionality, because the constitution provided for the three constitutional officers, the comptroller, the treasurer, and the secretary of state. And his bill created the Department of Highways, the Department of Education, the Department of Revenue, the department of this, that, and the other, and took from the comptroller's office the tax collecting and disbursing authority and made the state comptroller's office an auditing department, and that's what it still is. And the Department of Revenue

collected the money; the Department of, uh, another department, disbursed it, and the treasurer's office and the comptroller's office were relegated to much less important positions.

So Peay enacted that. He said, in substance, a Highway Department, there's always controversy. Up to that time, had a Highway Commission elected by the General Assembly, one from each of the grand divisions of the state, and there's always controversy about the laying out of road systems, and so forth. Peay said, "I want the legislation authorizing me to appoint a Commissioner of Highways, and I'll take the responsibilities for whatever is not done and what is done. I want that authority myself." And so it was given to him. And he appointed a man by the name of Crary as Commissioner of Highways that laid out a state system of highways. And Peay developed the image, and I think rightfully so, of being a strong executive that ran the show and took responsibility for it. He died in office.

DR. CRAWFORD: What had he done before he became governor?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He had been a member of the Tennessee General Assembly. He was practicing lawyer in Clarksville, Tennessee. He'd been chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee and looked the part and acted the part of statesman, right down the line.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was he a popular governor up until his last year?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, he was.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, he was in his third term then.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: And could not have been re-elected. Could not have run again.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: But I suppose he is considered one of the strong governors.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He is considered one of the strong governors of this state.

DR. CRAWFORD: And is responsible for the Tennessee road system.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He is responsible for the Tennessee road system and the reorganization of the state government into the departments as they now exist and have been enlarged upon. And he had the appointing power of the Commissioner and exercised that prerogative with force.

DR. CRAWFORD: It has worked for a long time. Do you suppose it's time to revise it now, and reorganize it again? It's been fifty-some years since Austin Peay.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, in this last legislature they had many directorships and since Peay's day many divisions and departments have been created for this, that, and the other, various boards, licensing boards, and other boards; and a piece of legislation in this present legislature undertaking to reduce that back down, approximating the situation it was when Peay took it over, it failed. And so the bureaucracy that has grown out of the reorganization bill has expanded, and there's a movement not to abolish, but to retract and bring it back under a fewer number of departments. That failed in this last legislature.

DR. CRAWFORD: But it would combine it under a smaller number of commissioners.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: It would not repeal the Peay reorganization bill, but to bring back various agencies of government back under these heads, and let them be directed . . . One, for instance, is the--and that spearheaded the opposition to this bill--one is the Department of Veterans' Affairs. They wanted to be an independent agency, and didn't want to be under the Department of Adjutant General under this new bill. And so other departments, and other departments--they all finally got enough votes that they begged this effort in this last legislature to reorganize, re-reorganize.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. I know what you mean. I'm on the Tennessee Historical Commission, which is under the Department of Conservation now. And there was some doubt on the part of members of our commission.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: About whether that was . . . a good move to consolidate it with the Department of Education, maybe.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir, uh-huh. But, I think it will be coming back around again.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, it will.

DR. CRAWFORD: But Austin Peay could certainly see far ahead. He really had foresight in doing that.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he was strong. e was a man of

man of great vision and strength and character, and took the bull by the horns and drove right through with it.

DR. CRAWFORD: I don't remember another Tennessee governor ever dying in office. He may be the only one. And then Henry Horton took over. But this was in the last year anyway, wasn't it?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: In the last few months of Peay's administration.

DR. CRAWFORD: 1927, I think.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right. You don't remember another Tennessee governor dying in office? I don't immediately. Sam Houston resigned . . .

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. He went away to live with the Indians, I know. But I don't remember another one to die in office. Buford Ellington died soon after leaving office. But I can't remember another one ever who died in office.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Not in my day, and I don't remember historically of any others.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. I believe that's correct. It was unusual. What kind of person was Henry Horton?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Henry Horton came into office, succeeded Peay, as Speaker of the Senate. And at that time Colonel Luke Lea was the publisher of The Nashville Tennessean, a great supporter of Austin Peay. But Peay was a strong man and kept his hands on the reins. There had developed in Tennessee a

great financial empire headed by Rogers Caldwell that had bought up a lot of insurance companies, banks, and controlling interests and was a far-flung empire financially. They--he and Colonel Luke Lea--were Austin Peay men.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now Rogers Calwell and Luke Lea were Austin Peay supporters.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes. And they became, when Governor Horton, a less forceful man--elected to State Senate, elected Speaker, lived at Winchester, Tennessee, married down at Marshall County. And when he became governor, it was felt by many people, quite generally felt across the state, that they took charge of a vacuum.

DR. CRAWFORD: Because Horton was a weaker leader than Peay?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He was not the forceful leader and felt great responsibility to them. And about that time the Recession and Depression set in. And Horton was re-elected--Horton was elected. And during his administration the Depression set in, and it was said that Lea and Caldwell exercised an unholy influence on Horton and manipulated the depositing of state funds in banks under their control, and finally during Horton's administration the Recession reached a point that a great many of those banks collapsed, insurance companies went down, and the Caldwell empire blew up, and the state lost a lot of money. And during Horton's administration, the last term of his administration, I was a member of the Tennessee General

Assembly. And a determined effort was made, spearheaded by Mr. Crump, to impeach Horton for permitting or taking part in the manipulation of these state funds and not protecting the interest of the state, and being dominated by Lea and Caldwell, and a determined effort was made to impeach him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Can we go back just a minute and pick up your career? In 1925 you had come back here to practice law. And you . . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Correct. In 1925 I went to the state of Florida in the gold rush. In 1925, in August of 1925. I practiced law here for about two months, and I went to Miami, Florida, and obtained my license to practice law in the state of Florida. I'd had, in days ahead of that, when I was, got through a business course in the city of Chattanooga, I'd had a connection with some Florida developers who had offices in Chattanooga, and they moved to Florida and became major developers, developers of Florida and East Coast land. And when I went down there, I went down there and joined a former employer of mine named LeGro.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was his name, sir?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: L-e G-r-o.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He was a California man and his company had acquired, had developed several developments in Florida land. After Chattanooga he went--he had an agency in Chattanooga selling colonization of lands in the Everglades of Florida. And he'd become so sold on Florida and its future that he went to Florida and started a land develop-

ment business of his own down there, and made great success, to the point that his organization acquired Bay Baum land rights, between Miami and Miami Beach and Biscayne Bay. And through the War Department and the Florida legislation, he acquired that Bay Baum, turned it to the War Department to build islands by dredging from the bay bottom of Biscayne Bay, building sea walls around, and making islands and connecting those islands with a toll causeway.

And after I got to be a lawyer my former employer of Chattanooga asked me to come down there and go with his company and I did, and was with him down there until after Peay's death in 1927. And about that time, the bubble burst in Florida, and I came back to Cannon County to start where I'd left off, practicing law, and in 1929 I became a member of the State Senate.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. Now you practiced law up here from '27 till '29?

SENATOR CUMMING: Yeah, I practiced law here from '23 to '25 went to Florida and was down there from '25 till 1927; I came back to Woodbury and resumed the practice of law at Woodbury. And in the primary of 1928 I was nominated, and in the November election elected to the State Senate, and went to the State Senate as a member of the State Senate in 1929. And Horton was governor.

DR. CRAWFORD: What counties were in your district then, sir?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Cannon, which is this, DeKalb, Smithville, Rutherford, Murfreesboro constituted my senatorial district.

Now I'm fixing to tell you a story that I fear I'll forget about.

A move was underway, spearheaded by Mr. Crump, to impeach Horton. That was not in 1929, that was 1931. In 1929, there was a fierce battle for Speaker of the Senate. A man named Jim Bean, from over here at Moore County, Lynchburg, was candidate for Speaker, and Bill Abernathy, from McNairy County was a candidate for Speaker. Horton, Lea, Caldwell forces were supporting Abernathy. The anti-Crump, anti-Horton group were supporting Jim Bean. And they ran in a Democratic caucus and had 25 or 30 votes. And two votes in the Democratic caucus wouldn't vote for either one of them. They voted for a man from Jackson, Tennessee, who was in the Senate. He and a man by the name of Bratton from Union County, Obion County, voted for neither of these other two, and neither one of the, and we balloted and balloted and balloted. And finally in desperation, it was a compromise situation that was reached. And this man Bratton right up here, you see, he . . . the Abernathy forces joined hands and got the two, Barry from Jackson, Tennessee, the father of the man that was with Life and Casualty that was after attorney general, his father . . .

DR. CRAWFORD: William Barry?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Hmmm?

DR. CRAWFORD: William Barry?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: William Barry.

DR. CRAWFORD: Dick Barry.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Not Dick, not Dick, no. This man was named, oh, Barry from Jackson; Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Dick Barry's from Lexington, Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That was way back in 1929. These two had joined forces with Abernathy forces, and elected one of the person that had been voting, and they elected Bratton.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was Bratton's first name?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Sam, Elected Sam Bratton, Speaker. And it was rough doings. And during the course of that term of the legislature Bratton sort of fell out with the people that had combined to elect him. And they went through that. And then the next session of the Legislature, I was in the House the next term. I thought I was getting my cart before-- I was in the Senate at that time, 1929, up there. The next session of Legislature I was in the House.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year was that, sir?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: In '31, 1931. I was in the House and by that time the Depression was on, a speaker was elected from the county of Shelby named Scott Fitzhugh. Does that ring any kind of a bell with you, Scott Fitzhugh, a very prominent lawyer that had moved from Paris, Tennessee to Memphis, and had been elected for State Senate, part of the Crump organization, as they all were?

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: And he was elected Speaker. And then during the campaign they started the campaign of impeachment against Horton.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, let's see. Scott Fitzhugh was Speaker of the House?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Senate.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of the Senate, yes sir. But you were in the

House.

DR. CRAWFORD: Okay.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Scott Fitzhugh was elected Speaker of the Senate. And a campaign was started in the House for an impeachment of Horton. Crump was very much interested in that, of course. But it got injected into the campaign, that if Horton got impeached, Crump's man, Fitzhugh, the Speaker of the Senate, would become governor, and a reaction set in that was a great threat to the success of the impeachment proceedings. And you know what Mr. Crump did? Mr. Crump, to stem that tide that he was fixing to grab the governorship for one of his own, forced Scott Fitzhugh to resign as Speaker of the Senate in midterm, and they elected Jack Broadbent from Clarkesville, Tennessee, Speaker of the Senate.

DR. CRAWFORD: Jack Broadbent?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Jack Broadbent, who was acting Secretary of State, and a Peay man. So Scott Fitzhugh stepped down as Speaker to rob the pro-Horton forces of a wolf cry that he was going to become the governor and Crump would have the whole thing in his hands. He forced Scott Fitzhugh to resign. And in the House-- I was a member of the House--I opposed. The impeachment resolution was never passed. I opposed it on the theory that Horton was not guilty of any crimes or misdemeanors that were impeachable offenses, that he was a weak brother when he was elected, and was not guilty of any impeachable offense. He was maybe an undesirable person to have as governor, but was not subject to impeachment. And we went through that thing in 1931, spearheaded by Mr. Crump, as I've told you.

So that was 1931.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, who became Speaker after Scott Fitzhugh resigned, Broadbent?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Jack Broadbent of Clarkesville, Tennessee, who had been a part of the Peay organization, and was a highly respected person. So Crump wasn't taking any chances on losing any more ground by electing another . He wanted Horton impeached, and so that was his strategy.

So I continued in the House then for three or four terms, under the plan that we had in the Democratic State Committee. The counties of a district--senatorial district--by agreement between the executive committees of the several counties--could designate the county that would furnish the senator, the candidate for senator, in the Democratic primary. And we had a rotation agreement in this district, as they had in practically all districts of the state, where there was multiple counties in the senatorial district, adopted a rotation plan, so every eight years it came the Cannon County's turn under rotation agreement for Cannon County to elect the senator. So from then on, for many years, every fourth year I'd be a candidate for the Senate, and the other years I'd be a candidate for the House.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. So you switched back and forth?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Out of eight years when I served under that rotation plan, I served four terms as state senator, and the other terms I served as a member of the House, up until I announced that I was not going to be a candidate any longer, and I was elected during those terms except when Governor Gordon Browning was elected governor, I was elected Secretary of State, and served four years

as Secretary of State. Then came back after my term of office as Secretary of State, ran back for the legislature, and was in the legislature until four years ago, when I announced I wasn't going to be a candidate any more.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year was that, you announced you'd not run again?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, this is the second term . . . four years ago, I announced that I wasn't going to be a candidate. We elected a man name Buck. He's been there the last two terms.

 All this talk's most been about my career rather than the things, probably, in which you are more interested.

DR. CRAWFORD: No, I want to hear this too. You have never been defeated for office in an election, then, have you Mr. Cummings?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: No, sir, Bob White says that I'm one man that served a longer term in the Tennessee Legislature than any man in the history of the state, beginning with John Sevier, down to today.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Dr. White would know.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: And that I'm one that was a candidate during all that period, and was never defeated for public office. Now whatever that, whatever glory there is in that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it's quite a historical distinction.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: It puts me in a class by myself. Anyway, it doesn't particularly mean that I was a

great man of any kind, but politically I was successful from the time that I ran and was elected circuit court clerk in my county in 1914 till I retired from public service four years ago. I was a perpetual candidate except while I was in the Secretary of State's office and the two years that I spent down in Florida, I was running for or serving in public office all that time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see. You left the General Assembly about in '73, didn't you, or '74?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I left, uh, yes, Frank Buck was elected in '74, in the latter part of . . . I was elected in '73, and I . . . announced in Nashville. I resigned, and I was fixing to resign, I said, well, I announced that I wasn't going to be a candidate. So as to burn the bridge behind me, in 1974--in the spring of 1974, I not only announced that I wasn't going to be a candidate, but I actually offered my resignation to the governor, and it was accepted, and I went out of office, actually. I wasn't going to have it. I decided I was going to get out, and I didn't want to . . . and I wanted all the other candidates who had told me, several had around through the state, that if I decided not to run, they wanted to be a candidate, but they weren't going to run as long as I ran. So to make certain that they could get in and get their feet wet and not have the rug pulled out from under them, I just gave up the office and resigned, and was not a candidate.

DR. CRAWFORD: I see what Bob White meant about your record.

 And of course that was a few years ago. You went on and did more after he told you that. He's been dead several years now.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh yes. He told me that, I had that distinction back then, and I continued on. Now Reagor Motlow died the other day, over at Lynchburg, and he had served thirty years in the Tennessee General Assembly, House and Senate.

THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY.
THIS PROJECT IS "THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF TENNESSEE." THE DATE IS MARCH
25, 1978, AND THE INTERVIEW IS WITH SENATOR JAMES CUMMINGS IN WOODBURY,
TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD AND IS TRANSCRIBED
BY MARY JANE MORGAN. INTERVIEW II.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, Mr. Cummings, let me ask you before you
get off, what years did you serve as Secretary
of State in Tennessee, because I know that Gordon Browning was in two different
times.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Look up there and see when that commission
was issued to me. It's '51, I think.

DR. CRAWFORD: '49.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: '49 to '51.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir, that was after World War II, when
he came back.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: You know, he served a while before the war,
one term.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Hmmm?

DR. CRAWFORD: Gordon Browning served one term before.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Before the war, a previous two-year term he
served; and then he was elected again in '51;
and I was elected Secretary of State.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, let's see. You were in the legislature all through the 1930's and ...

SENATOR CUMMINGS: 1929 until 1974, except six years. I was four years Secretary of State and when Browning was elected his last time I was his state campaign manager.

DR. CRAWFORD: In 1948, when he was elected? No. In 1950, his last term?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: His last term, 1949. I was elected Secretary of State, served four years as Secretary of State.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was on into Clement's administration.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Clement came in then, that's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Well, sir, during the 1930's and the Depression, you were in the legislature.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of governor was Henry Horton in his last year? I know he survived the impeachment attempt, but did he have any strength as governor after that?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he maintained strength, he continued to be, without the towering, dominant position that Peay had occupied. But he went through his administration with reasonable good working relations with the General Assembly.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know how he felt about the attempted impeachment?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, nothing out of the ordinary, except he was, uh, beleaguered in fighting back as best he could.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Well, now, let's see. His enemies, some of them, got in trouble, you know, Rogers Caldwell and Luke Lea ...

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Both Colonel Lea and Rogers Caldwell were indicted for their manipulation of finances, hiding deposits and things from one institution to the other. Lea was convicted over in North Carolina; it extended over into North Carolina.

DR. CRAWFORD: He spent some time in prison, didn't he?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he come back to Tennessee afterwards?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did he do later, and did you ever meet him?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, frequently, yes. He was elected. I never will forget what Lonnie Armes said about him. They put him in the penitentiary at Nashville. Lonnie was chief clerk in the state treasurer's office, of Hill McAlister's office. Lonnie was a tough-going politician. I'll never forget what Lonnie Armes said when they put Colonel Lea in the penitentiary. He said, "Now I want to see to it that he don't have access to a telephone. If he does, he'll still do more things in Tennessee politics than most of us can do out on the outside." (Laughter) But Lea was a powerful man -- served a term in the United States Senate, you know.

DR. CRAWFORD: What made him so influential?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he was [of] a very prominent family, well-to-do family, the Lea family. And he

married into a very prominent Tennessee family. And he was a promoter, and he acquired and published the Nashville Tennessean, that was a powerful influence in the political, certainly in the Democratic circles in Tennessee. And in that way he developed into a powerful man in state politics.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he die in the '30's, soon after the trouble?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I can't recall. He was defeated by McKellar in the first statewide primary. We changed the law so as to elect United States senators by popular vote instead of by the Tennessee General Assembly, and he and K.D. McKellar and M.R. Patterson, who had been former governor, came back. The three of them ran, and McKellar was nominated, Lea [was then] out of office.

DR. CRAWFORD: Malcolm Patterson?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Malcolm R. Patterson, the man that pardoned Cooper.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. What happened, now, to Malcolm Patterson after he was defeated in 1910?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he was living in Memphis, Tennessee. He went back down there and continued to live down there and never was back in any public office.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he practice law then?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I understood that he did. He was a lawyer by profession. I understood that he did practice law. I'm not too familiar with that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he get in trouble in Nashville one time after that?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: While he was governor, he got in trouble.

He was given to some intemperance in the alcohol business. And he was at cross-purposes with the city administration of the city of Nashville. And a raid was made on the red light district, and he was there, a guest of it. And he got in serious trouble about that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know if that was set up?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, I don't know, of course, it depends on which side of the thing you're on.

They say it was a trap, or something.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Anyone would suspect that, probably.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That may well have had something to do with it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did that seem to hurt his political career?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, that didn't help it. And he went down with that and the other thing. He did not pursue his campaign for re-election.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Did they get publicity for that, when he was arrested in the red light house, did the reporters cover that?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, hell, yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: They must have known in advance.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: They--oh, it got widely circulated. Now I don't recall, but I think that was after he had pardoned Cooper. And maybe they were, uh, I'm not sure about this, but I doubt whether he was promoting any campaign for re-election, not at that time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, let's see ...

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he probably wasn't eligible to be re-elected. I just don't piece that together right good.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, he had served three consecutive terms by 1910. I think he was first elected in 1906, so he had been in three terms.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he had reorganized government some, I remember, not as much as Austin Peay.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: But, in fact I don't suppose anyone has as much as Austin Peay.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Patterson's greatest achievement, as I have the thing in my mind, was his advocacy of the enlargement and development of the educational system. And the state "Normals" were established during his administration, which, the university down here now, in Memphis, and Johnson City, were in that group. And the General Educational Bill, he advocated that with equalizing state aid for the less affluent, sparsely populated areas of the state. That was his great achievement as governor, as I have it in my mind.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, let's see. In the '30's, when Henry Horton left office, he was succeeded by Hill McAlister.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Correct.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of governor was he, Senator Cummings?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he was one of the finer men that I've

known in public office. He had been state treasurer, and he had been city attorney for the city of Nashville, had been in the state senate back then in the Patterson administration. He was what we called, belonged to the "regular" Democratic organization, and was a popular man amongst them. And he became governor and had a good administration. Nothing spectacular. He was the son of a former justice of the Supreme Court in Tennessee, McAlister was, Judge W.K. McAlister. And he married a Miss Jackson, who was of a very prominent Nashville family connected with the Harding family, and the Belle Meade folks. So he was a highly respected man of unquestioned integrity and ethics, and knowledgeable in state government, but sort of operated on the status quo.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, he also had a handicap of being governor in the Depression.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Had a handicap of being governor in the Depression, and had the handicap of being rather hard of hearing. But he was a good man.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see. He served from, well, about four years, didn't he? Two terms, I believe.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right. He and Louis Pope had his campaign, Louis S. Pope. And McAlister had the support of the Crump organization.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did the Crump organization support him?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Why did they?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, as I view it, it was just a continuation of affiliations that had been during the former years. He was sort of a part of the organization, not a heeler, but was one

of the more prominent men that had gotten along with Mr. Crump.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember anything special he did?
I know he mainly supported the status quo.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I don't have in my mind any outstanding,
certainly no revolutionary changes within
the state government.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Well, of course, he was succeeded
by a different kind of person. Gordon
Browning at the time was fairly young.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right. Now between Gordon Browning
and McAlister, things just changed about.

The McAlister folks, when Peay was about to retire, his organization supported
Burgin Dossett as a candidate for governor.

DR. CRAWFORD: In 1936.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Now, and they had, they thought, the right
to expect that Dossett would be supported
by Mr. Crump and Senator McKellar. And Browning was assaulting the state
administration for doing nothing in this, that and the other, and cronyism.
And it became apparent in the last days of the campaign, when Dossett's
folks were expecting, and dependent in a large measure on the heavy vote of
Shelby County to elect him. In the last week of the campaign, and the last
hours of the campaign, Mr. Crump announced that he was supporting Browning.
And McKellar still supported Dossett. But McKellar's box went ten to one
for Browning. And Browning carried Shelby County by something like eighty
thousand votes. And Browning, the night of the election, in his response, he
made the statement that haunted him afterwards, he said, made the public
statement that there were eighty thousand reasons why he loved Shelby County.

And he and Crump, the thing that many expected, I certainly expected, Browning, who had a military background, came into office with Crump's support, and it wasn't too long until they clashed. I had supported Dossett. I was not pro-Crump. And that year I was in the Senate, and when Browning advocated --- after they fell out, or maybe before they fell out, during the time --- Browning advocated what we call a unit process of nominating candidates for statewide office in the party, which is the majority system, which gave to each county a unit vote, depending on the majority that prevailed in that county. So Cannon County had, we'll say, ten votes; and Shelby County had eighty votes in the nominating process. So on the unit plan if the candidate carried Cannon County by ten votes, they got those ten votes; and if Shelby [County] gave somebody eighty thousand votes, they just still got their eighty votes. And that became unpopular; and Browning was defeated for his second term.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you think he fell out with Boss Crump?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, it was just a clash of personalities and who was going to be the head man of the show.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Mr. Crump was accustomed to being the head man of the show.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right. And Browning was just militarily inclined enough. He had been commander of a unit, he was captain in the Army in Europe. Colonel Lea was the colonel. He was an artillery captain under Lea. And, but anyway, he had a military complex. He ran the show. He gave the orders.

DR. CRAWFORD: He acted like governor while he was governor, didn't he?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah, that's right. And Mr. Crump wanted

to call the deal and they fell out.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Uh-huh. You don't know of any special other disagreements, though?

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

No, it just developed into a general disagreement. It just got to be a war in camp. But I think that was the origin of it. So that during these years there came to be, and of course, during the early years and most of the time and until the Supreme Court of the United States passed the decision of one-man-one-vote, the state was apportioned in a manner that the rural membership of the legislature had a rather strong voice. And during that period of time there came to be in the Tennessee legislature, first in the Senate and then the House, one would be a man by the name of I.D. Beasley, from Carthage, a young lawyer, as I was a young lawyer, representing the rural community, and a man by the name Walter M. "Pete" Hanes of Winchester, also a young lawyer representing a rural constituency, and we, sir, had tenure in the legislature.

DR. CRAWFORD:

What was Mr. Hanes' name again?

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

Walter M. --- Walter Miller Hanes. So out of tenure and exposure, not because of our particular ability, I don't, I never thought, we became regarded, anyway, as the spokesmen and leaders of the rural block in the Tennessee legislature.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Were you the "gold dust" ... uh, let's see, it wasn't twins. What was the name?

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

Oh, this man, Barker, wrote in the magazine section of The Tennessean, he wrote an article on us that described us as the "unholy triumvirate" or something like that, called us the "gold dust twins" and "the three horsemen" and all that kind of stuff.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Who was this writer, sir?

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

His name was Barker. He was The Tennessean's editor of the magazine section for a long while.

SECRETARY:

Do you have that copy of that "unholy trinity"? I bet he'd love to read it. Do you have it here ... the copy of you ...

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

I think I have it down there ... I know I have it down at the house, a copy of that magazine section.

SECRETARY:

I was thinking we had a copy ... you did have a copy ...

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

Well, we may have it here. The last few years I've lost ...

DR. CRAWFORD:

I'd love to see it.

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

I have a hard time finding things in my file, as if I'd never had them.

SECRETARY:

Where would I look?

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

Under "Cummings" down in this ... So we, uh, maybe it's not too much to say, we became what some thought was good parliamentarians, familiar with the rules of parliament and the methods of taking advantage of situations and so forth, making the most out of it. So we, for years and years and years, were close allies in the legislative branch.

DR. CRAWFORD:

I've heard a lot about those days, Senator Cummings. And you three were the most influ-

ential people, I believe, in the General Assembly in those days because of tenure and seniority and parliamentary ability, I believe.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right. Maybe we had this advantage ...
 whatever, if that's the right word or not.

A great many of the rural legislators come to Nashville, and the feeling grew across the state that the thing for them to do as rural legislators and freshmen, was to come and take counsel with us, and join our organization, and so forth. And that means, by means of all of us, we seemed to be regarded as people of some ... you got it?

SECRETARY: No, I've got some other papers he might like
 to glance at.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, get that other one. That's the only
 one ...

SECRETARY: "The Unholy Trinity"?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: "The Unholy Trinity", that's it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And all three of you were influential in the
 state, and in your own districts. I remember,
I.D. Beasley, wasn't there some story about some road repairs going on?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. Governor Cooper got to be governor;
 and he was a little fellow, and a little ill-
tempered, and so forth, tried to make up in being mean for what he lacked in other things. And the story, that's been told many times, that they were building a road, Number 70, out of Carthage, blasting off rocks and so forth. And Governor Cooper was returning from up in east Tennessee, and they had the road blocked. And so he drove up with his entourage, whoever he had, and had to go around, detour way around somewhere. And Cooper got out and said to the highway flagmen, said --- they say he said --- "You know who I am?". I don't

know whether he put it that bluntly or not. But anyway he told the man, "I'm the governor, Prentice Cooper; and I want to go through here. I'm in the state chair, got official business. I'm in the state chair and want to go through. Let me through this detour." And it's said that the man said, "Well, I don't give a damn if you're I.D. Beasley. I wouldn't let you through."

DR. CRAWFORD: (laughing) Told the governor that?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Told the governor that!

SECRETARY: Well, I've located everything except that.
Do you think it may be down at your house?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I know there is a copy of it down at my house.

SECRETARY: I've gone through all the old Couriers and
New York Times, everything that you're in.

I can't find "The Unholy Trinity".

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, it was ... if need be, I can find it
down at the house.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'd like to see about getting our library,
if you'd be willing to make a copy of those
things to put on record, uh, with this interview about this. Because I know
you've been written up in a lot of papers over the years.

SECRETARY: I've got gobs of old papers ...

DR. CRAWFORD: So you're the "unholy trinity" and the
"gold dust" what?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, I don't know... they called us the
"unholy trinity", anyway.

SECRETARY: I'd love for him to see that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I hope I can.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: They had it in three different issues, one on me and one on ...

SECRETARY: Where is it down at the house? I'll go get it. Is it in your study?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: It's in my little office there, amongst those papers there.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you start working in association with Walter Hanes and I.D. Beasley?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, they came to the legislature, both of them, during the time that I was in the comptroller's office. Then after I started in the legislature they kept returning and they stayed on 'til they both passed off before I did. And they had ten or twelve, thirteen terms in the legislature. I had sixteen.

DR. CRAWFORD: What things did you cooperate in most with them?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: In what field?

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, my chief work in the Tennessee Legislature was in the field of public education and health. And I made it my chief aim to get what I thought was adequate state appropriations for public schools, and the colleges, your college and this one down here. I got a letter from Kefauver commending me. I went on the theory that the matter of public education and public health and the making of citizenship for the state, that it was just as important that an education of a youth or the health of a youth on one side or the other of the county line, ought to be as good in one as it was in the other. And that it was a state function, and that, on the theory --- I've been quoted

on it for quite a few times, and I don't think I originated anything in my life, I think, other than expected.

But I was quoted, largely that I said my theory was that, to raise the money where the wealth was, educate the children where they were, and give them equal opportunity. And we made much of it, as best we could. Some demagoguery, I guess, carried along with it too, that for a child living across the county line in a small county, Cheatham County, and another living just throw a rock over his house in Davidson, they had more money than they knew what to do with, running out their ears, had all the good teachers, they increased teachers' salary, had facilities, and people across the line in the other county had poor facilities, undertrained teachers, and that uniformity in education in Tennessee did not exist. Opportunities did not exist because of the distribution of state funds.

And my whole legislative career was devoted to the equalization of burdens and of expenditures for education in all the counties of the state. It was a running battle with every session of the legislature, and the big city would take the view that we were baiting them for the benefit of rural, less affluent, sparsely populated sections, and we were just --- that each county ought to take care of its own, to some extent, and that was the burden of my legislative career.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Was that the position that was taken against your educational aims, that is, to leave it at the county level?

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

They wouldn't say that entirely, but in practical application, that's what they wanted to do. "If we want to levy a sales tax down in Davidson County and have

better schools, go ahead and levy --- you raise the money up there." Now, they did have what they called an equalization fund, apportioning various counties on a damn formula that was as long as, uh, the United Nations, some of their charters. You couldn't analyze it and it worked out inequitably, and we were suffering because of lack of funds, because we didn't have the wealth to do it. Davidson County was prospering and had a fine educational system, raised their teachers' salaries. "We raised the money to raise our teachers' salaries." But have a state level, a minimum, and the state will contribute to that minimum level, of say, four thousand dollars, just to say that figure. Well, Davidson County just put on a little this or that, half a mill or something, to have enough money to pay their teachers six thousand dollars a year, so, hell, all the good teachers just left the rural communities and went to the city, where they can get a better salary, better facilities, schools; while we were walking through the mud three or four miles to school up here, why, they were tripping down good sidewalks in Davidson County to a nearby school with all the facilities for an education and everything, all the extra that they could have, and we were having damn one-room schools out in Cannon County having a hard time.

I started out, in my experience as a one-room teacher, that we built the fire, went to the spring and brought the water, played on public roads, shot marbles for entertainment while the others had stadiums and gymnasiums and inside-this and everything-that. As a country schoolteacher, I promised myself in my youth that if I lived and ever got in a position of government, I was going to equalize opportunity for these here as compared with opportunities of those in the wealthy, more densely populated cities. And I spent my life in that work.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you saw it happen, didn't you?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I saw it come to a realization. Step by step, and fought every way over thirty-forty years in the Tennessee Legislature. Every year was a new battle.

DR. CRAWFORD: And do you feel it's fairly well accepted now that it's a state responsibility?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: More so, we still have the certain formulas that --- we haven't reached it, but it's so much nearer the goal that I hoped for, that it's not bad. And now we've developed universities at Murfreesboro, and one over at Memphis. We have the vocational schools scattered all around the county. Now, just since my time, anybody that wants to go to college, get a B.S. or a master's degree or whatnot can do it. Murfreesboro's right at hand in travelling distance. And it's --- I've seen it grow, not to my complete satisfaction, but, for most practical purposes, I've seen it bear fruit. Now we have our educational opportunities in Cannon County comparable to what they are in other cities. Our health situation is on the same basis.

DR. CRAWFORD: What is the approximate population of Cannon County, sir?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Uh, less than ten thousand. About nine thousand.

DR. CRAWFORD: And people here always gave you good support whenever you were running for office?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: On that platform, that was my platform every year, that I was going down to try to see that the wealth of this state provided the children of Cannon County an opportunity for education comparable to those of the centers of population and wealth.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you helped the economy of Cannon County a good deal, too. Quite a percentage of the people here were working for the state in one way or another, weren't they, over a period of time?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, about, of a percentage, about we got, uh, were able to keep our quota up about on the top with a, not overdone. We got our road system built, Cannon County road system, intercounty road system, so that you could go to get your health facilities built. We got our school improvement made. And we are now, you might say, first-class citizens.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Well, it took a long time, and a lot of work. And you were there through Gordon Browning's first administration, too, '37 to '39, or whatever.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: And, of course, you were there through all of Prentice Cooper's terms in office, three of them. What kind of governor was he, Senator?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Prentice Cooper?

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he was a bright young fellow that was the, uh, product of the Crump organization. And you have to say, it's true, in my opinion, that Mr. Crump demanded honesty among public officials in Shelby County and as he dominated situations in the state. And he demanded of his people that, and Cooper had it easy because Crump was dominant and was his supporter. And he followed Mr. Crump's policies of state government.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you think of any instances in which Prentice Cooper disagreed with Boss Crump or took a different position?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Never heard of it. Not in his dreams, even.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. He seemed to agree completely with Mr. Crump, then?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, whatever Crump advocated became the policy of the state. And not necessarily bad, I don't mean that, that I don't think he was undertaking to run it for any selfish---certainly not any corrupt practices. I think Mr. Crump demanded honesty, not only locally but where he had input in state affairs. He was the boss!

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you meet him personally?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Many times.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. What kind of person was he? What did he look like?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he was tall, bushy-headed fellow, eyebrows that hung out way over his forehead, and walked with a walking cane, and spoke with self-approval. He didn't have any doubt about which way he was going.

And he had excellent lieutenants in Nashville. The most prominent one was a man named Frank Rice. He died several years ago. And he knew how to get things done, and Mr. Rice was his legislative representative. And Mr. Rice had the faculty of getting along with even the rural legislators, and would make concessions.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did Mr. Rice get along so well with everyone?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he was a likeable person, and hobnobbed with them, stayed there during the whole session. And he would make concessions and give us a break about some things, and give us the Crump support, and sell Mr. Crump on the idea.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about Mr. Crump's other lieutenants?
I think Frank Rice died and was replaced by others, wasn't he? Do you remember Francis Andrews or ...

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, I remember Francis Andrews. I remember the attorney general down there, McLean, Dave McLean, he was up there part of the time. But he ruled a delegation with an iron hand, Mr. Crump did. What is that?

DR. CRAWFORD: This is your 85th General Assembly Legislative Council.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Legislative Council?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was Francis Andrews as able as Frank Rice?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Uh, he was not as capable in dealing with the membership of the General Assembly as Mr. Rice. No doubt, he was a man of ability, but in that phase of his work, nobody had the touch that Mr. Rice had, that's ever represented the Shelby delegation. Right over there to your left is a thing that I consider probably one of the funniest things. I was always able to get along with the press very well. You reading that?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. "The News Award, 1955, to a man of ability and leadership, Honorable James Cummings, direct representative from Cannon County. Selected by members of

the Council of Correspondents Association in a poll conducted by the United Press, the most outstanding member of the House of Representatives, and also the full 79th General Assembly of the state of Tennessee."

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That is Hart and somebody, Tom Jefferson?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, I always was able -- our present governor, I've thought about it many times, he keeps his foot in his mouth with the press. I found out in my youth that if you're going to run a beer joint or a pool hall, if you couldn't get along with the policemen on the street, you'd better get in some other business. For [if] they can give you a fit every day, twice a day, and run you out of business. And the press, if you get into a running argument, counterattack the press, you may feel like it a lot of times, but you're pulling the temper down on your head if you propose to have a publicity campaign against the media. You can't win that kind of a battle, so I always managed to get along.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you ever tell the present governor, Governor Blanton, about that?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I told the governor's lieutenants about that. Blanton was in the legislature when I was Speaker, serving, and I liked him very much. He's a good man, and I think he's had a good administration of the affairs of the state. But every time he meets up with a reporter of one of the broadcasting systems or a reporter for one of the newspapers, if some article has appeared on the back page of the paper or in some newscast that he doesn't like, he starts an argument with the reporter about it. And they write it up and find phrases and

use it, and so forth, to put him in bad.

And I think he had developed a great unpopularity not because of his administration of the affairs of government, but because of his unnecessarily--- politically, certainly unnecessarily -- and made a statement that he liked some man named Humphreys down there who's serving time, ^[and] before he went out of office he was going to appoint him. [As] much as say, if he robbed the till out there, I'm still going to pardon him before I go out of office. And damned if they haven't run him ragged on that. And he takes it as offensive if somebody writes an article that one of his underlings out there has cheated somebody in the sale of a car, state surplus property or something. He takes it and gets in an argument with newspapers about having that article in the paper, and has a lot of mean things to say about them and so forth, just stays in a running argument with the press. And he comes out with the bloody head as far as the public's concerned.

SECRETARY:

The press was always real good to Mr. Jim, but he was good to the press.

DR. CRAWFORD:

That's what we're talking about.

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

Now, in the newspapers, Lesley Hart, all these newspaper people -- Memphis supporters and all -- they came around to me and said, "Well, I understand you had a rough session last night in the committee on so-and-so." Hell, I'd tell them what took place.

SECRETARY:

But, Mr. Jim, you know, a couple of weeks ago they took a picture of one of the legislators asleep in his chair.

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

Yeah.

SECRETARY:

And he got up and raised hell with them,

and everything, and got in trouble. Well, look at this picture that happened to Mr. Jim one time. Well, he got up the next day and complimented the photographer.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: What'd it say under the picture?

DR. CRAWFORD: It says, "Cummings took a bit of ribbing about this news picture of him asleep in the legislature."

SENATOR CUMMINGS: But does it say what I said?

SECRETARY: No, I don't think so.

DR. CRAWFORD: It probably does in the ...

SENATOR CUMMINGS: What I said in substance was that I might have been taking a little nap, that the night before we'd stayed up nearly all night working on a General Educational Bill. And I spent the night writing largely that paragraph of the Educational Bill, and I was paying no attention. They were rehashing it in the House that day, and I might have been taking a nap, but I said, "If you'll get that bill and look on it, you'll see my fingerprints on Section 24 that took care of Cannon County." (laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: That's good. Young lady, what's your name?

SECRETARY: Linda Brown.

DR. CRAWFORD: And would you mind if I look through these?

MRS. BROWN: No. That's the one that's on Mr. Jim. One of these is on Pete Hanes and the other's on I.D. Beasley.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That man -- what's his name?

DR. CRAWFORD: The author, uh, writer?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: George Barker.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: In 1964. Yours is on April 12th. But he ends the series on the unholy trinity.

MRS. BROWN: April 5th, April 12th, and April 19th.

DR. CRAWFORD: In The Tennessean. I'll speak to you about getting to come over sometime and make Xerox copies of this, if we could.

MRS. BROWN: I thought that you might want to look at that.

DR. CRAWFORD: All right, I'd like to see that also.

MRS. BROWN: I'll give you that paper. We've got several of those, Mr. Jim.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: All right, yeah.

MRS. BROWN: This was his appreciation day here. Then they had a big appreciation day at Middle Tennessee State University and named a building after him, a high-rise girls' dormitory; and Mr. Jim asked President Carter if he would get any special privileges because it was a girls' dormitory. And he said, "Well, yeah." And Mr. Jim said, "Well, you've waited forty years too late ... " (laughing)

DR. CRAWFORD: And you wearing bow ties even back then, all the way back then, huh? (laugh) Well, for someone who started as a one-room schoolteacher, you've ended up doing a lot for education.

MRS. BROWN: Well, that's always been his cup of tea, education. It's been the thing that he's fought for all his life.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'll keep this and look at the others.

MRS. BROWN: Yeah. They're real interesting.
You'll really enjoy them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it's very historic. Senator Cummings
has been in the Tennessee Legislature longer
than any other person in history, and has a longer period of always
winning, of never losing any.

MRS. BROWN: He's never lost an election.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Whatever that means.

MRS. BROWN: Mr. Jim, I just want to tell him this one
little story. It won't take me but a minute.
Now I think it's funny and you don't particularly think it's funny.
But in the first race Mr. Jim ever made was here in the county for
county court clerk--circuit court clerk. So he had to go horseback
out in the country to electioneer.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: They had, that was before automobiles.

MRS. BROWN: So he said, the first person that asked
him to spend the night, he just took them
up immediately.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Feed my horse, bed me down and feed me
and . . . well, wasn't any money.

MRS. BROWN: So he went to this man's house, and he
said, "Well, spend the night, Jim." "All
right, I'll just do that." So they fed his horse and fed him a big
supper. And he said, "Now there's a protracted meeting going on up

here," said, "I guess you'll get to meet a lot of interesting people. Might get you some votes." Mr. Jim said, "Well, I'll just go with you." So Brother Stacy--

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Having a meeting in a log church house,
about 30 by 30 square.

DR. CRAWFORD: In 1914, that would have been, yes.

MRS. BROWN: So during the sermon, when he got through,
he said, "Now look, we're going to take up an offering," said, "Now I'm going to put the table right out here in the middle of the floor and let everybody walk by and make their contribution." Well, Mr. Jim said, "I just remember, Miss Linda," said, "I had one big silver dollar, the only cent I had to my name." He said, "I just knew that if I laid that down and took up some change, they'd say, 'He took up more than he put in.'" So he said, "I just bellied up [to] the table." And he said, "I walked down here and plopped that thing good and hard," and said, but that's one dollar the good Lord got that was begrudged!" (Laughing) See, I ought to write a book. I know a million tales like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: You know, with some like that, it would be
a great book if we had some things like
that to tell.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, yeah. I could tell you a million.

DR. CRAWFORD: The best things about Tennessee history

often don't get in the books. You know, you've seen some very interesting things happen in the legislature that have never been written, haven't you?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, it'd be a thousand things that have escaped me. Might, once in a while somebody'll say something, make me think of that, and I'll remember the story.

MRS. BROWN: Every time I ask Mr. Jim a question, he says, "Well, let me tell you a little story." So he tells me some story that's related to the question that I asked, something that happened years ago with so-and-so.

DR. CRAWFORD: Then you're the one that should write the Tennessee history.

MRS. BROWN: I wish I could. I don't have the mentality to write. My daughter's a writer.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, some man wrote me a letter the other day, a man named McMurtry . . . says "I'm writing a book." Everybody's writing a book now. Says, "I'm writing a book on things that have happened in the courtrooms of rural Tennessee. And I wish you'd give me a statement of the things that you consider the most amusing and the most . . . things that have taken place in the courtroom." Well, thousands have taken place, of course, but when you're in the heat of trying a law suit, and some witness says something or does something that creates a scene or does something, you're so damn intent on what you're doing that you don't have time to get into the act completely or remember to. . . So it is in

the Tennessee Legislature. During these many fights that we've had in the Tennessee Legislature, political and otherwise, legislatively, they were so damn tense and serious at the time that I just never took the [time and] fully appreciated the comical side of some of them. So I'm that way about this man writing the article. . . .

MRS. BROWN: I go with Mr. Jim to court all the time.
I wish you could hear him ~~te~~ll law students, argue the case before he talks.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, there is obviously a lot of experience there. You've been practicing so long.

I was trying to remember. There is, let's see there is another old attorney, not really old, either, but he's had a lot of experience, and I'm trying to remember, I believe in his 80's, in Knoxville, that I talked with, a criminal attorney over there. I'll think of his name later, you know how it is. But there are some of these things that have happened that need to be recorded. And I was asking about, we've been going through Tennessee history, sort of by administrations. We were up to Governor Cooper, Prentice Cooper. Do you remember any occasions of Prentice Cooper's relations with people?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he, uh, that experience over there is typical.

DR. CRAWFORD: With I.D. Beasley. . . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah, with I.D. Beasley. Down at Murfreesboro he had an experience with a drop into

a hamburger joint or something, they were selling beer, he got into it. He had some bad experience with the operators of that.

MRS. BROWN: He had some experience with Long Brown,
in Sparta that I had forgotten.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: With what?

MRS. BROWN: Long Brown and Sparta. Uncle Carroll.

SENATOR CUMMINGS; Yeah, yeah.

MRS. BROWN: But I forgot what it was. He came to Uncle
Carroll's funeral while he was. . . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: We were anti-Cooper, Beasley and Hanes and
I. So when he was inaugurated, or was about
to be inaugurated, after he was elected, about to go in, he [then]
started a campaign. I was down in Florida. He sent telegrams to all
the members-elect, wanting them to pledge themselves to have a 60-day
session of the legislature. Sent me one of the damn things, a tele-
gram down there. So I wrote him back and told him that I was for a
55-day session. (Laughing) Not going to let him differ!

MRS. BROWN: I'll go and leave ya'll alone.

DR. CRAWFORD: No, no. Please don't go.

SEANTOR CUMMINGS: Oh, well, he was, I don't know how to des-
cribe him, but he was ill-tempered. They
told a story on him about his telephone got out of whack, cause some-
body was, some repairmen were working, and they was, us, these repair-
men were working on each other, got some cross-circuit someway, to his
office. So this man on the pole rang to get his fellow-workman, some-

one, and, hell, got the governor's office. And well, the man said, I don't know how it goes, the man said, and the voice answered back, said, "This is Governor Cooper." He (the telephone repairman) said, "Well, that's fine," he says, he said to him, says, "I heard about the man in the asylum that said he was President Hoover or something." And Governor Cooper says, "Who are you?" And by that time, the man caught on that he had had a cross-connection, and. . . Cooper spent day on day trying, got the telephone people, trying to make them identify the man that had talked to him on the telephone kidding him about. . . . (Laugh). Now, that sort of thing. Cooper went through that all the time, about some porter or some guard at the penitentiary, or flagman on the road. He'd get up an argument with them, about some little shake-a-pin thing.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he have trouble with **someone** at the Capitol, one of the porters or someone there?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, Leslie, that has been there for years--Leslie was a guide around--worked out of the governor's office as the Capitol guide, and so forth. Oh yes, he got in--Leslie resigned. He got along with all the governors. And was a popular person, a graduate of Tennessee State, or A & I, it was back then, a very popular. . .

MRS. BROWN: Mr. Jim has given me some awful good advice. I know, there was one particular person that used to come here that was Mr. Jim's renter. Invariably made me furious, he couldn't read and write or anything, but she always wanted to boss me. And Mr. Jim saw me out there one day real

mad, so he came out there and he said, "Linda, I want to teach you a lesson." He said, "Now, when you let this person make you mad, he said, "it's just exactly like me walking through Central State Hospital and some of the patients calling me a bad name, and me getting real mad and want to whip him." Said, "Now, you've got more sense than that, so don't you let her make you mad." (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, now, Governor Cooper did that a lot, didn't he?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes. He married a mighty lovely lady from Johnson City. They have some fine children, but he was just born rich, and just didn't know how to fraternize with ordinary people and be pleasant. His wife's a lovely lady.

DR. CRAWFORD: She's living in Shelbyville, now, I believe.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: She's living in Shelbyville. Very well-to-do, he was. His daddy was rich. His daddy was Speaker of the House, way back.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. He was before your time, wasn't he?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah--well, I just was a young man back--uh, I don't know whose administration his father was Speaker of the House in. I don't remember. But he was, I don't know the word I want to use, he was, but he was hard to get along with.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, he was, he was defeated, or rather he could not run again in '44. . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: . . . He had several terms. And, let's see, Jim McCord was elected that year.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember anything about the election of '46, when McCord was elected?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, I remember--McCord was elected practically without opposition. He had been a newspaper publisher at Lewisburg, and then was elected to Congress and served two or three terms, uneventful, very pleasant, likeable fellow, an auctioneer. And so he was elected and nominated, elected governor practically without opposition. And Browning finally defeated him on the sales tax issue.

DR. CRAWFORD: I wanted to ask you about that because you had an important part in the first sales tax in '48, wasn't it?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: . . . When Jim McCord proposed it.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes. I did take an active part in that.

MRS. BROWN: Who was it that was defeated because of something about the sale of a--was it a hotel?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, that was Browning. Browning got into that. Yes, Mr. McCord advocated a sales tax. I was opposed to it, and still am, opposed to a sales tax as a major source of revenue, on the theory that, as between sales tax

and income tax, I think that sales tax is regressive and those of us that make \$5,000 a year pay taxes on every damn bit of it; somebody's making \$120,000 don't pay sales tax on a hell of a lot more than we do, the groceries and so forth. I've always been against it. But Mr. McCord advocated it very--and they had all sorts of figures about what it would bring. Louisiana, and different states had passed it. I was against it; but finally I said to them--Buck Headden was in the legislature, he was the leader of the forces--they had said it'd raise so many dollars. And had figures to prove it, statistics and everything, and so forth, and I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do." Looked like it was maybe going to pass anyway, but I was giving them trouble about it. I says, "I'll tell you what I'll do." You all ask--you say it's going to bring in how much? A million and a half dollars?" "Yes." I says, "If you'll accept this amendment, I'll relent." "All right, what is it?" They needed me awful bad, to get it passed. I said, "We just [will] write an amendment that all, if any, over the million and a half that you say it'll raise, the overage, we'll distribute it to the small counties." So they passed it, and hell, it brought in a third more than they had said it would. And we had a windfall in Cannon County.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, did you think it would produce more or were you just guessing it might?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, I was satisfied. I had figures that

it would bring more than that. I had a figure that, my figures was that it was going to bring a good deal more than that, and I was opposing it because it was going to bring more than the state needed. That was one of the oppositions, and because I thought it was regressive, too. And we'll now make a determined fight against it and had them sort of, on a rail. So they accepted my amendment.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see, the rural group opposed the sales tax in '48.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you were one of the leaders, and it was your amendment that they accepted.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: For the overage. That was my amendment that gave the overage to smaller counties.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you feel that the administration knew it would produce more, and just wasn't. . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, I'm not sure about that. They professed to believe that it wouldn't do it, and accepted my amendment, thought it amounted to nothing. They claimed they thought it would. Yes, they were mistaken in their estimate of what it would produce. So Mr. McCord got it passed, and then he was a candidate. And Browning ran against him. And Mr. McCord was going about all over the state, campaigning and asking for re-election. He would pass through these damn little towns and

they'd throw pennies at him out of the street, and so forth. And he was a good man, but he advocated an unpopular sales tax.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. You think that was the main factor in his defeat in '48?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes. And Browning's popularity. Browning had, first from, oh, say, it was a military record that maybe glorified him a little bit.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, he had military records in two wars, of course. How did Mr. Crump feel about that, when Browning came back to run again against his candidate, McCord?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, he was against it, oh yes. He was against it. He had supported him when he was first elected against Burgin Dossett, given him that tremendous majority in Shelby County. They fell out, and the unit bill was Browning's undoing.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you suppose Mr. Crump supported him in his campaign way back in '36?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Because he saw he was going to be elected. He concluded, his polls and everything showed him, that Browning was going to be elected over Dossett. And he made overtures and went into the Browning camp in the last days of the campaign, and gave him his tremendous majority over Dossett. And he got on a bandwagon to save, salvage something out of the campaign rather than be defeated with Dossett.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Well, Burgin Dossett was very popular in some places, wasn't he?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh yes, yes. He'd been Commissioner of Education and was president of the, I think it was president, of the Tennessee Alumni Association, a very popular man, Burgin Dossett was.

DR. CRAWFORD: He had played football, I think, at the University of Tennessee, and was he president of one of the colleges at one time?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes. After that he was president of the East Tennessee College, yeah. I prevailed on Browning, after Crump and Browning fell out, and Browning had his very sound and popular state finance bill that provided that the state should not go into deficit spending. And so I had supported him on that, and when a vacancy came, I can't remember the persons involved, but a vacancy came in the presidency of the college at Johnson City. I went to bat for--I had, as I told you, I had become allied with--I supported Dossett. But in this fight, when he and Crump and lesser of people I hadn't gotten along with politically, when Crump and Browning got at loggerheads, I, at Browning's invitation, took up his state refinancing bill in the Senate, and led the fight, and got that enacted. And I became a very popular man with the Browning administration, because of my support of, helping him salvage his thing after Crump had turned against

him. So, when the vacancy came up for appointment of a supporter of Dossett for president, I went to bat for Dossett and Browning supported him for the presidency of that thing, that institution. So we were jumping from one to the other, depending on who you disliked most. And keeping affiliation, a general objective in my mind was, as I said, I was thinking about the rural county funds for the appropriations, so I got along all right with Browning.

DR. CRAWFORD: I don't mean to keep you too long without a break. . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: No, you're not keeping. . . I very seldom. . . I don't. . . you may be getting hungry.

Whenever you get ready, I'm . . . but as far as me, having a noonday meal, I used to say, if I saved that much I practiced it for economy more than anything else, just not eat it--lunch.

DR. CRAWFORD: It is economy. Now, didn't people use to carry a sandwich and ride a train up to the legislature sometimes?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh yes. Yes sir, yes sir. Go out in the hall. My great granddaddy was the president of a bank here and lived over in the part down under the hill where that man's looking. So he rode horseback to Woodbury, with three or four ears of corn tied to his saddle to feed his nag on and Warren brought his own lunch. Wasn't any restaurants in Woodbury, had to, if you had to stay.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. I've heard about times like that in the General Assembly.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh yes, it--back in those days it was a four-dollar-a-day job. Now they get \$3600 or something for a salary, for annual salary. Back in those days we got \$4 a day and mileage to and from, 8¢ a mile, I think it was. And you could rent a room at the Noel Hotel for \$2 a day, half of your salary. So we hadn't money--eat on the other \$2 a day. People that came from a long distance, many of them--people came from a short distance would take their lunches, and so forth.

DR. CRAWFORD: I have heard from a few of your neighbors about days back then. Let's see, John Anderson, I believe, over--is he in this county or in Putnam County?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He's in Putnam.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. But close to the line.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Robert Boyd, over in Warren County, I've talked to.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, during one session of the legislature, I.D. Beaseley and I had a little rathole room in the annex to the Hermitage Hotel. Bill Caldwell was manager, and he gave us the monthly rate. You could go in the back way and go up to this annex on the south boulevard. And we met at the Elks'

Club, all the legislators operated in that section.

So anyway, we was rooming there, and we had a fine friend that was in the grocery business, the wholesale grocery business. And over at the Elks' Club we was taking some drinks, and this friend of ours said, "I'm going out here to Mount Juliet, someplace on a trip. You all go out there with me." So we went, and I guess we took another drink or two along the way, I don't remember just all about it, but he got whatever he was doing out there and came back. "Well," he says, "I want to carry you by my wholesale house." McBrothers was his name, had a big wholesale house. So he carried us by there. We said, "All right," it was just--we didn't have anything--got out and went in. He got us one of those carts--electric or motor carts somewhere. Sailed down through that place, damn stacks of canned peaches and everything as high as--he and I was looking every minute for him to turn one of those corners and hang the thing in there and tumble down on, down on us. Finally we got away; anyway, he carried us back to our room and left us, "Good night," well, we had a good time. Had a fine night out, doing a little playing, fancy drinking and going on, right at Christmas time, money was awfully scarce. Mack was well-to-do, a wholesale grocers' fund person. So I.D. and I, recess was on, fixing to come home for Christmas.

Next morning we were laying up there, maybe our heads a little swelled--that helps! Somebody knocked on the door and a couple of

people at the door, said "is this Mr. Cummings' room?" "Yes." "Mr. Beasley?" "Yes." Said, "Well,"--they had on plaid coats, and such-- said, "Well, Mr. McBrothers has sent Mr. Beasley and Mr. Cummings a couple of cartons here," all wrapped up in brown paper, taped up and everything. And we said, "Fine, bring it right in, put it down." And we had no doubt but that Mack had sent us a half-case of whiskey apiece for Christmas, to bring home. So we laid back down and finally I said, "Well, I.D., damn if I'm not going to get up and open my case and take a drink. I'm feeling pretty bad, I believe I need a drink." He said, "Well, all right," he'd just get up with me. So we got up and got, I opened up the thing, fixing to take a drink out of that, hell, money was the scarcest thing there was around, and we was just thinking about what we were going to do for Christmas whiskey. And Mack, bless his heart, had sent us up just--there was Santa Claus, if there ever was one, so we got up, getting up and I.D. was saying, "That damn Mack McBrothers," said, "he's a fine damn man. Isn't it fine to have a friend like McBrothers?" And we bragged on him-- what a great man Mack was, got up and opened that, and you know what it was? Peaches! (Laughter) I.D. says, "That son of a bitch. He sent peaches here and. . ." so we went on back that day for lunch, eating a sandwich, something over there at the Elks' Club. I saw Mack coming and I said to those sitting at the table, I says, "I.D., tell these boys at the table with us about what kind of experience we had with McBrothers." So, I.D. cut the corners and told what kind

of a son of a bitch he was, disappointing us about that. . . Mack walked right up behind and listened at him tell about what it was. (Laughter) Mack was a fine person.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, people did now and then give members of the legislature gifts. . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. I'll have to tell this one about--uh, I served the legislature with Mr. Lem Motlow, uh Reagor--you won't know who Reagor Motlow is?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir--a senator who just died.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He just died the other day. Well, his father was named Mr. Lem Motlow. Mr. Lem Motlow was the nephew of Jack Daniels, the founder of the distillery, and Mr. Lem came to the legislature, and I served with him. I. D. and I were members. And among the other people that were members of the legislature, was Weldon White, nicest kind of fellow, very straight-laced and didn't want to, shunned the appearance of any kind of evil. I.D. and I weren't quite that straight-laced.

And so, about one Friday, when the legislature was fixing to adjourn, I.D. and I were rooming together up there, and Mr. Lem Motlow came up and said, "Jim and I.D., I brought you a fifth of my finest Jack Daniels. And I bought three: I bought one for you, I.D., and one for Jim, and one for Weldon White. Where is Weldon?" Well, we said, "We don't know where he is." He said, "Well, how about just

leaving Weldon's fifth here with ya 'll, and will you give it to him?"

"Oh yeah,"(we'll play the con game.) Hell, we never mentioned it. We didn't mention it to Weldon for some time, finally told him about it. He says, "Well, I don't believe I'll take it," he said, Weldon did.

MRS. BROWN: 'Course he's already drunk. . . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: No, we never told Mr. Lem but what we gave it to him.

MRS. BROWN: 'Course when you told Weldon, it had already been drunk up, hadn't it?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, oh yeah, he was awfully late. But Weldon's a mighty nice fellow. But, oh, it wasn't out of the ordinary and, as far as I was concerned, I had my own course of legislative practice. Anybody wanted to give me a fifth of whiskey, I was much obliged to them, yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: So it's an old Tennessee tradition.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. BROWN: Mr. Jim never had any desire to run for governor, and I always wanted to, but he never had any desire to, because I think it would, he could have been elected in a landslide.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: It's a big state, and it takes a lot of money. Oh, I think, I think I could have been elected to Congress two or three different times.

DR. CRAWFORD: I would guess so, with the support you had.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Because the district that I represented was rural.

MRS. BROWN: Mr. Jim, I was reading this "unholy trinity" article just now, again. And it said you were driving a '57 Ford, and it talked about [it]kind of ugly. Is that the car we're still driving?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, no. No, that was--I've had two or three cars in my lifetime.

MRS. BROWN: Have you? (Laughter)

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. BROWN: I drive him--what are we driving now?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: '67

MRS. BROWN: Yeah. . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, it's just ten years old, car I now own. . . practically new.

MRS. BROWN: 'Course you can't open the doors. (Laughter)

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, I never was afraid to be seen coming in or going out of the night spots, or drinking at the bar, or doing anything else.

MRS. BROWN: I always begged Mr. Jim to get a low license plate, like Number 2. You know why he wouldn't do it? He says, this is the story, you mind if I tell it?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: No, I'll tell it.

MRS. BROWN: You can do it better than I can.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I said I was going back and forth to Nashville. I was Secretary of State, Speaker, had license plate Number 2 at one time, and Number 4 when I was Speaker. And I never would take it and put it on my car. Somebody asked me one day, "Why don't you put this low number on your car?" And I said, "Hell, I, on my way home, I stop at beer places, and I don't want somebody looking and saying, 'Well, I see Jim Cummings has closed down on us.'"

MRS. BROWN: But tell him where you learned that lesson when you were a little boy.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I caught on to that from my experience when I was a boy--a young man, rather. There was a friend of mine had a spotted horse, the only one there was in this country. And there were places of disrepute, bootlegging places, and places of worse repute, immorality, to some extent, promiscuous places. . . .

DR. CRAWFORD: Even in Cannon County.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Even in Cannon County. And they were scattered about different places. So this man he had this spotted--everybody went horseback, by the way--so, if I passed a place sometime, I'd say, "Well, I see Marion Thorpe's fre-

quenting that place tonight." I'd see that spotted horse, wasn't any question about who it was, his was the only spotted horse there was in the country. I learned not to identify yourself, leave outside an identification that you're on the inside of a place of disrepute.

MRS. BROWN: Mr. Jim, can I tell him the story, about the time you had the lawsuit about this man frequenting this house of ill repute? Mr. Jim had Sam on the witness stand. He said, "Now, Sam, on such-and-such a night, were you frequenting this place?" Sam says, "Oh, no sir, Mr. Jim, I wasn't frequenting. All I was doing was picking my banjo. I was not frequenting." (Laughter)

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He thought that word "frequented" meant that he was there doing something immoral. He denied frequenting it very vividly, said, "Oh, I was just out there playing the guitar!" Yeah. Courtroom stuff. I'll try to remember that. I'll tell, damn if I don't tell McMurtry that story. That's a good story.

MRS. BROWN: I wanted to tell it when I made that speech in Murfreesboro. But George was a little bit afraid for me to, he was afraid it might be a little bit risque, and I didn't tell it.

DR. CRAWFORD: That would be a good one to send in.

Mrs. Brown: I've told several of them back in Murfreesboro.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, I've had a lot of fine experiences, and I like to think, that with all the rough-and-tumble, knock-down, drag-out fights, and sometimes sound like there was great animosity and so forth. I like to think that in all these years that I've been in the Tennessee Legislature, that the people with whom I served have been my friends.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, they have. You've--you've made them--you've always told me to make new friends all the time, because you'll outlive yours.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's what someone asked me, I said, "Any enemies I've ever had, I've outlived them. So I don't have anybody left except friends now.

MRS. BROWN: Right.

DR. CRAWFORD: You've been making more friends lately.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Hmmm?

DR. CRAWFORD: You've been making more friends lately, then?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, I've just been losing some by death. No, I haven't made many in the last few years. I haven't been, occupied with, get along with the young folks that grow up, try to keep in touch with them, best I can. But I've had a very pleasant experience in my political and professional life. Got along fine, enjoyed life.

DR. CRAWFORD: You've generally been happy with your
profession and your town?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Every day I--yes, I have been. Prac-
ticed law and did a little farming, fooled
around, did a little fishing.

DR. CRAWFORD: You make anyone want to live there, in
Cannon County.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Somebody asked me one time, says, "When
do you take your vacation?" I says, "Hell,
I take a part of it every day, because it takes you too long to get
over one of these week's vacation."

MRS. BROWN: Tell him the story about Clint Beasley,
your good friend. See, Mr. Jim wants to
retire, but I won't let him retire.

DR. CRAWFORD: He told me one about I.D. Beasley.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, Clint, his older brother, was named
Judge Clint Beasley, the county judge over
in Smith County for years and years. So he retired, got him a rocking
chair and retired, Judge Beasley did, and some fellow says, "Judge,
I want to ask you a question." Says, "You been active all the days
of your life, public life, and everything, and retiring. What the
hell do you do with yourself all day?" He says, "I'm busy all day
every day." He says, "Doing what?" Says, "Well, I spend about
half my time trying to think of somebody's name, and the other half
going to urinate. Don't have a dull moment, busy all the time."

(Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I think you're doing well to stay busy. I believe that's really good for you.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh yes.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, I think it is too. I don't want him to quit at all. He's talked about it, but--why, we had, what, four law suits last week in other towns.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it's a beautiful state, and it's good to travel around a little.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, somebody comes in here with, every day, wanting a damn birth certificate or something. They've got the erroneous name on their birth certificate, and they're having trouble getting it corrected, so he'll take a couple of hours. . .

MRS. BROWN: It took us three hours yesterday to get that one. . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Three hours. Well, everybody was here, from way up distant part of the county and sat here till I got through trying lawsuits at the courthouse, came on, I said, well, so, during the noon hour yesterday we worked that thing out, filed a petition for them, got it all certified and sent it off. I spend a lot of time helping people who've been my friends through the years and supported me, and so forth. I tell somebody I have the best non-paying practice in the whole country.

MRS. BROWN: That's true.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: So, a good deal of my time is spent trying to help somebody get Social Security,

or, you know. . .

MRS. BROWN: We spend two-thirds of our time helping people do free things.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Get on Social Security, or getting their birth certificate figured out, or getting something done . .

MRS. BROWN: Getting people jobs.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: The rest of it, we stay in the courthouse, trying suits.

DR. CRAWFORD: I've heard that Senator Cummings at one time had about a fourth of the people here placed in jobs, in the county.

MRS. BROWN: Oh yeah.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, we've heard from . . .

MRS. BROWN: He got my husband postmaster a few years ago.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Governor McCord tells a story that I went with him, during Governor McCord's administration, I was accompanying him from Smithville to Woodbury. He'd been and made a speech at Smithville and coming to Woodbury to make a speech. And I was directing traffic; I was navigating the trip. And he claims that we got up here to Short Mountain country, that I said, "Now, this is the way we're going to have to get right through here, and down this way." And just ran into a damn road that you

you couldn't get over, finally all of us got stuck and everything. He come to find out later that that was a road that I was trying to get him to put on the program. And I gave him a trip on it. He said he promised to have it fixed. And He did.

MRS. BROWN: (Laughing) Well, you were smart taking him right on the old road.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Governor McCord was a nice person.

MRS. BROWN: Mr. Jim, you got George his first job under Governor McCord, with the state.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes sir--I'd forgotten about it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who has been the most interesting governor you've ever known now?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Clement.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you say that? You've known all of them since A. H. Roberts.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I've known a lot of them since Roberts. I've been there, I was still working in the comptroller's office when Peay came in. And, well, he was the most humane, and personable--oh, I hate to say that about--Ellington was very fine. Mr. McAlister was very good, but he was deaf; he couldn't hear you talk. Mr. McCord was just as nice as he could be, and Horton--they're all, all right. Cooper's the most, uh, ill-tempered one amongst them. They've all been, all--I like them all, and managed to get along with all of them pretty well.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, let's see. You were there both

times when Ellington was governor, weren't you?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes.

MRS. BROWN: You were Secretary of State under Ellington, weren't you?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Under Browning.

MRS. BROWN: Oh yeah, Browning.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, you saw a big change in 1970 when a Republican governor, Winfield Dunn, was elected.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: I served two years after he was in. And he was a very likeable fellow.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, now, he was a Republican, and that was really different, wasn't it?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did he get along with the General Assembly?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Good. Right here in this little newspaper thing under Jefferson's picture,

who is that, Governor Dunn and Mrs. Dunn?

MRS. BROWN: Uh-huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. And Mr. Jim.

MRS. BROWN: That's all he's known as, just Mr. Jim.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Now, the next one, right over there. Who is that governor right there on the next one with...

MRS. BROWN: Where, honey?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: On the left, on that spring thing right there.

MRS. BROWN: This one?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: No, the framed thing over there. That's not framed. On the left corner.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, this is Governor Dunn.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's Dunn and Joe Evins?

MRS. BROWN: Uh-huh. The inauguration. That's where they had the party for him. And that's Governor Browning.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: And this is Ellington over on the other.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I know that when Governor Dunn came in, it was different, having a Republican governor in. Was the governor's office still able to work all right with the General Assembly?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh yeah. He was very good in that respect. He got along. He kept oil poured on, covered the waters pretty well, Dunn did. Yes, I liked him very much. In fact, I liked them all. I have a hard time figuring out somebody I don't like.

MRS. BROWN: I've never heard you tell me that you disliked anybody.

DR. CRAWFORD: Maybe that's why you have so many friends, because you've liked people.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, at least I don't get up any arguments. I am liked in the courtroom.

And in the legislative halls, where they disagree without being disagreeable, they say, or something worked like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know you were out of office when that happened, but do you think the legislature had changed a lot before Governor Blanton came in, in 1975?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, there has been, during the last few administrations, a growing desire and effort and practice, amongst members of the legislature, to be more independent of the influence of the Governor's office, for good or bad.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was the legislature pretty much under the governor's control, under Clement and Ellington?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, not too much under control. They were more cooperative, now for good or bad, you figure that out for yourself.

DR. CRAWFORD: Would an administration bill most likely pass then?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yes, they took more pains and trouble to cultivate a working relationship with the legislature than some of the other governors had. And I, I had a thought that I wanted to say. Now, if you have a governor, a state administration, with the resources, records, statistics, finger on the pulse, state operations and some man named Willie Jones over here in

DeKalb County or up in Pickett County, or up in Hancock County, has been a good Justice of the Peace up there maybe or a nice merchant, runs for the legislature, and comes down there, he don't have any more idea than a goose what ought to be done. The governor has made a campaign advocating certain principles and certain things. For him to come down there and say, "Now, listen here, Governor, you're Governor, but I'm elected for the people of Hancock County. And I'm going to be my own man, and I'm going to help run this government," and he don't know a damn thing about what he's doing. He's necessarily dependent upon the governor, and if the governor has made a campaign, been elected to office on that campaign, it's not like being a member of congress where you've had long continuity in office, had a staff, and fairly familiar with it. And these damn legislators proposing to be independent of the state administration, they frequently cause more trouble than they correct. And it's not necessarily bad that we have the leadership from the governor's office. But if he's a bad man, of course it's a bad thing.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why was it, then, that Governor Blanton had so much trouble with the legislature when he came back? You know, he'd been in the legislature with you, in the '60's.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well now, when he came into the office, he, in a measure, not in the same way, but in a measure, he followed the same sort of general practices that he did with the press. If he was in disagreement with somebody about

something, he expressed himself, and challenged them, instead of saying, "Let's sit down and reason together." Why, he hasn't uh, temperized with them a bit. So he just got himself, with many members of the legislature, same attitude and relationship between them he did with the press. Now, does that answer your question?

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: And it's my opinion.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Well, you've made it a habit to get along with the press and with. . .

SENATOR CUMMINGS: And with governors if I could.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh. Well, did you ever have trouble with any governors?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah. Most of the governors, when the legislature met, and by the way, I maybe had not supported him. I voted against more, I voted for more defeated candidates for governor than any man living, I guess.

DR. CRAWFORD: (Laughing) And won more yourself.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: But when the legislature met, and they had a program, and I was in the legislature on my own, it wouldn't be very long until the occasion would arise that they'd want to sit down and talk with me about their program. And I'd help to try to mold it, meet the things that I considered paramount. And if I could persuade him to adopt that and put that into his fiscal program, I'd help him pass the package. And

in that way I got to be on good terms with the governor, while we were helping each other. You don't have to surrender to get along. You just simply have to reason together and work out something that's mutually beneficial.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, most governors are willing to cooperate, to some extent.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: Maybe not all, but most of them.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Now, Cooper didn't feel the need for that because he had Mr. Crump squarely behind him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Mr. Crump supported some other governors too, you know.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did Prentice Cooper feel so much more independent when he had Mr. Crump's support.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, because he had the votes. He didn't have to worry about political effect of what he did. Had Mr. Crump to take care of that.

DR. CRAWFORD: You know, that's true. That was Crump's heyday.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah. He was at his height right then.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he started declining in power in the next administration, under James McCord.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know we've left out a lot of interesting things, Senator Cummings. Is there anything that I haven't thought to ask you that would be good.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: At the convening of one of the legislature, I'll tell you this. Pete Hanes wanted to be Speaker. And Mr. Crump was supporting Jim Corn, from Bradley County. He was a fine fellow, Jim Corn was, a good legislator. But Mr. Crump had gotten so powerful that he, during the holidays went up to the races someplace while the legislature was getting ready to meet, figuring all he had to do was come down the day before the legislature, crack the whip, elect his man as Speaker. I. D. and I and several more, Leon Gilbert, we were wanting to elect Pete, Speaker. And we got enough signed up that he was, just lacked one or two having enough in the caucus to be nominated. And there was a man in the legislature from Hamilton County, a blind man named Coleman. Always got elected because of his handicap and because of his advocacy of services for the blind. And that's all he was in the legislature for, was to get to be chairman of the Commission for the Blind, and have that. And so he managed to get along with Mr. Crump best he could. So we was wanting to elect Pete Hanes; Mr. Crump was out of town; we were just in striking distance, just lacked a couple of votes of having Pete put over. So I. D. Beasley had the capacity of mimicking anybody in voice, even Cordell Hull.

MRS. BROWN: Men and women!

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Men or women. So we was sitting up in that

Hermitage Hotel. The caucus was about to come on. Mr. Crump was up in Indiana, racing. Lacked two votes, we were just wondering where we could get them. I. D. says, "I tell you what I'll do. I'll call up Coleman, the blind man." Son of a bitch ought to been put behind the bars. So, he could talk just like Mr. Frank [Rice]. Well, you couldn't tell it--you couldn't. And so, Frank was an Italian-bred fellow; he talked with a very distinct voice. So I. D. got Mr. Coleman on, knowing that Coleman would do anything to please the Crump organization. So I. D. got him on the telephone and said, "Hello, Coley?" And he said, "Hello, Mr. Rice." See, he didn't even have to say, "This is Frank Rice." He says, "Hello, Mr. Rice, what is it?" Says, "Well, you've always been our friend and I thought I'd better call you and tell you what the lay of the land is around here." "What, what, Mr. Rice?" He says, "Well, it looks like this Pete Hanes has got this governship, I mean this speaker-ship and gone on." Says, "Well, I thought ya'll were voting Jim Corn." "Well, he said, "we were." Just like that, "we were," but says, "he's got it and gone. I just thought I'd call you in time for you to get on the bandwagon." "All right, if you say so." "Well", he said, Mr. Rice talking, says, "Well, you get hold of your two-or three delegation and get them all lined up." So that night, in the night's paper, it came out, said, "Hamilton delegation has pledged its support to Pete Hanes." And so they elected Pete. (Laughter) By a fault on a blind man.

MRS. BROWN:

Yeah, by a fault. Yeah, that was awful.

Mr. Jim, tell him, talking about I. D.

mimicking people so.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: He did it all the time.

MRS. BROWN: But what was he, you and him in your hotel room one night, knocking on the wall?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, Linda wants to get into these risque situations.

MRS. BROWN: Well, he's not going to publish this.

DR. CRAWFORD: But it would help Tennessee history because that's the kind of thing that is usually not known.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, I. D. and I roomed together for years. We were rooming at the Andrew Jackson Hotel, and the walls were thinner than my walls in there, between the rooms. The Andrew Jackson Hotel wasn't sturdily built.

So, we were there one night, and I.D.--my voice is a little high like a woman, to some extent, not feminine at all, you know, but a little high-pitched. So I. D. had gone to our room. We were in there talking about things. So there were a couple of Jewish fellows in the next room that heard our voices and thought we were two women in there talking. They knocked on the wall. In a minute, I.D. talked back two knocks. And they knocked back three knocks. He knocked back three knocks, a little harder, and so the telephone rang.

He said, "We're in Room 324 right next here, just calling you up, heard your voice there. We're from out of town, going through Nashville on our way to San Francisco, or someplace. Heard your

voices, thought maybe you girls might want to come in, take a drink with us."

Well, I. D. was quick to be able to--well, I. D. talked just like a woman. He said, "No, we're strangers here. Our husbands are railroad men and they are on a run to St. Louis." He said, "We're just spending the night. We're not use to being around a hotel. We're afraid to. . ."

"Ah, it's all right, come on in. Don't be afraid of these Jewish boys."

Well, finally, I. D. said, "Well, ya'll just come in our room."

"Well," they hesitated about that to some extent, but they finally said, "All right."

I. D.'s talking, and said, "Just come and give three raps on the door and everthing'll be all right."

So in a few minutes, one, two, three raps came on the door. I. D. went to the door and says, in a deep voice, "What are you son-of-a-bitches doing knocking on this door right here? Our wives are in here, and what are you knocking on this door for?" Goddam, these Jewish bodys scurried down that hall, and the traction when they turned the corner to get[on]the elevator. They went down and checked out, got their things and left! Byrd, what's his name, the uh. . .

MRS. BROWN:

Manager.

SENATOR CUMMINGS:

Manager of the hotel saw us the next morning, [and] said, "What the hell did

ya'll do to those fellas. . .?(Laughter) Those nice fellas! You ran two of our people out of the hotel! They came down here and checked out." I. D. could do that! He could mimic anybody. He did Governor Peay. He got Coleman to vote against a bill once that Peay wanted him to vote for, by meeting him on the Capitol steps and saying, "This is the governor. "Hello, Coleman."

"Howdy, Governor."

"House Bill Number 381's coming up this afternoon on the calendar. I wish you'd vote for that."

"Why, Governor, I thought you was against that."

"Well, I was, but I've changed my viewpoint."

And, "Well, I. D. Beasley's sponsoring that bill."

"I know it, but that's all right. You go on and-- ." So the bill came up and passed with one vote. Coleman voted for it, and then he [saw the real governor] said, "Well, Governor, you told me you wanted me to vote for it." (Laughter)

MRS. BROWN: Did Mr. Jim tell you about the governor use to hide their memo pads from Mr. Jim and I.D.?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, Ellington said that.

DR. CRAWFORD: No, what happened with that?

MRS. BROWN: Well, Mr. Jim, tell him what ya'll wanted to do.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: They accused [us]. I never did do that?

MRS. BROWN: Well, I know you didn't.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Jim Bomar was Speaker. I. D.'d be against some bill, so they said that he use^d to go

and take some memo pads out of the governor's office. And when the bill was about to come up, I.D.'d go out in the hall, and write a little note to some member who was going to vote against it. "Could you come down to my office a minute? Signed, Buford." Well, the page would carry it in there and lay it on the man's desk, and we would see the man get up and ease out. Goddam, right in the heat of the battle when they're fixing to call roll. The governor had sent for him, so he'd go down, get down there, and wait out in the waiting room, wait ten or fifteen minutes and finally get in, and say, "Governor, what is it?"

"What is it?" says the Governor.

Says, "Well, you wrote me a note that you wanted to see me."

Ellington say. "Listen, you go back and read that--that I. D. Beasley's written you that note." Finally got back up there, the damn bill had already passed. (Laughter) That's what they tell me.

MRS. BROWN: It's in this article right here.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, it is?

MRS. BROWN: Yeah, it is.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Ellington said that.

MRS. BROWN: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I expect things like that have been known to happen there.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Now, there was some thousands of things.

MRS. BROWN: [Reading from newspaper article]"Few there would challenge Hanes, Beasley, Cummings, and even fewer disliked them. But many say the easiest one to like is James Harvey Cummings."

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Said what, honey?

MRS. BROWN: "Many say that the easiest one to like of the three was James Harvey Cummings."

DR. CRAWFORD: That sounds reasonable. So, I guess they not only ran the state, but they enjoyed it.

MRS. BROWN: They certainly did.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Legislators now have gotten to be better statesmen than they use to be.

DR. CRAWFORD: But they may not have much fun.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Don't have as much fun.

MRS. BROWN: Here this is about the guy who said when they took that picture of him when he was asleep. This is in here, Mr. Jim.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: What is that, about the memos? Huh?

MRS. BROWN: No, it's about the picture that's in there when you were asleep.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. What does it say?

MRS. BROWN: It say, "I want to assure you that, while I may have napped a bit during the hearing, I was not asleep when this bill was drafted. And I will not be asleep when we vote on it. If you'll look real close at this bill, you'll see my fingerprints on Section 26."

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, they all enjoyed it instead of getting up a damn fuss with the photographer, and so forth. Why, so, they wrote a nice article about it.

DR. CRAWFORD: You know, that helps. Anyone can do something pretty good with criticism. You know, Estes Kefauver, was criticized. Boss Crump called him a pet coon.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Well, everyone called him a pet coon and they will, you know, [in] damn fool campaigns.

MRS. BROWN: Well, is that where Estes started wearing that coonskin hat?

SENATOR CUMMINGS: Oh, Kefauver, Estes, instead of taking offense at being likened to a pet coon, he just wore him a coonskin hat.

MRS. BROWN: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: He said, he might be a pet coon, but he wasn't Boss Crump's pet coon.

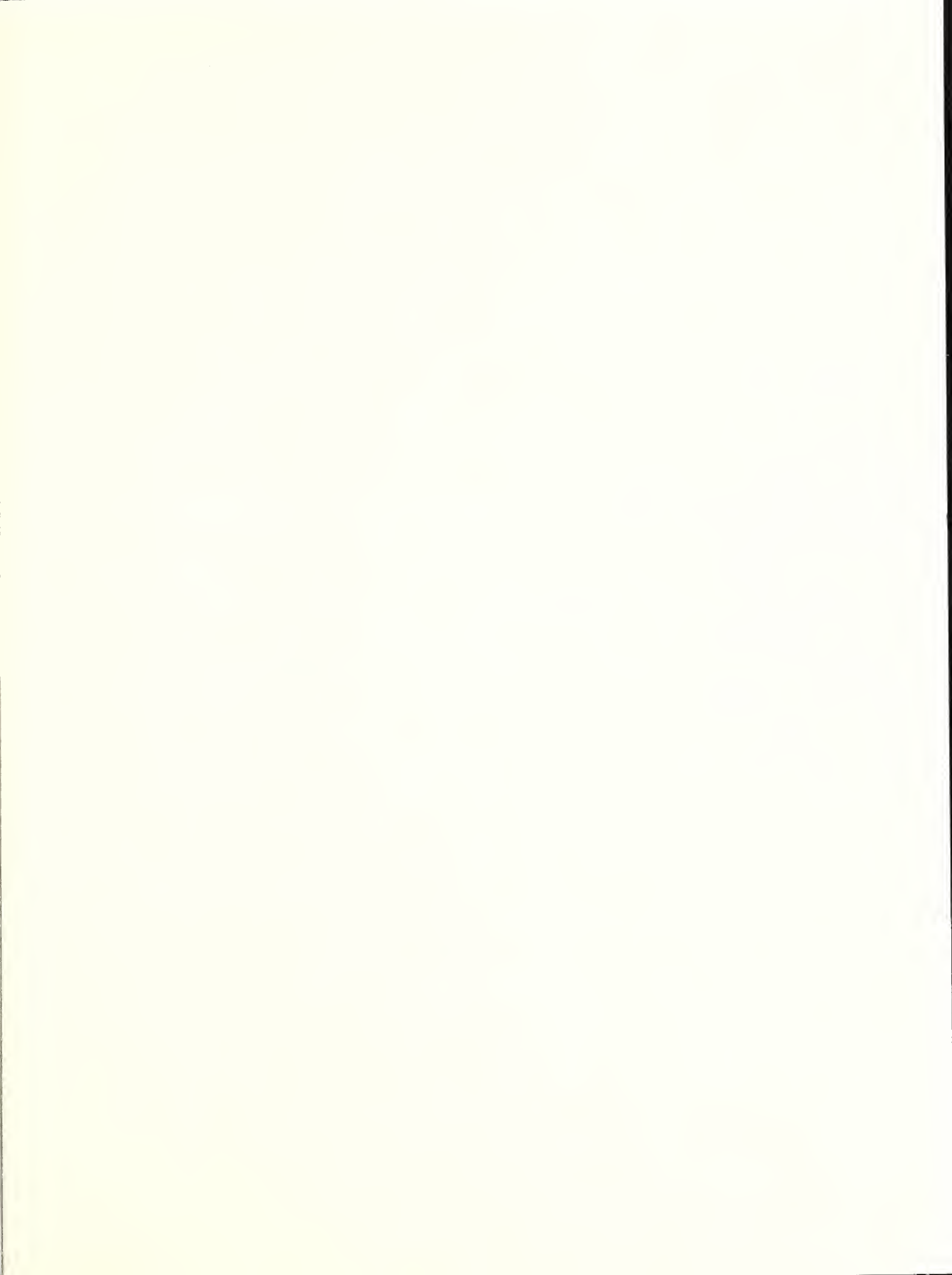
SENATOR CUMMINGS: That's right, he says now, he said, "I believe I'm everybody's guy." He capitalized on it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And did real well, too. Well, let's see, I was just trying to see here. I may have run this tape off. We have time for one more story, anyway. Do you think of any other one, now, that tells how things work in Tennessee? Senator Cummings, you've added a great deal to the knowledge about Tennessee. And I thought I knew quite a lot. But there's no one who knows as much as the man who's lived through it.

SENATOR CUMMINGS: 'Course I'm sorry, now, if I'd known I was going to get to be a state figure back during some of these times, I'd have kept up daily on a lot of things, and so forth. But I haven't--what I'm telling you is just things that I recall, or things that have been written.

MRS. BROWN: He never writes a speech out when he has to make speeches. It's strictly off the cuff every time. He doesn't study about it. He just gets up•

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, that's one of the advantages of this kind of interview, too, you see. You didn't keep a daily log or diary, but we can get a few of these things that you did. We have them for a record. Well Senator Cummings, thank you very much.



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